

So Hard to Discard!

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Objectives

- Identify reasons why it can be difficult to let go of possessions
- Develop a plan for how to let go of items that are cluttering up your home
- Identify professional resources available to provide assistance

Where does stuff come from?

- Free samples
- Items discarded by others
- Compulsive shopping (“Retail Therapy”)
- On-line
- Infomercials
- “Good Deals”
- Hand-Me-Downs
- Items left behind by family

Gradual accumulation over years

Why is this stuff important?

- Instrumental
- Sentimental
- Intrinsic

Why don't I just deal with it all?

- Discarding
- Decision-making
- Uncomfortable emotions
- Fear of making a mistake
- Loss of self

Consequences of Clutter

- Health Problems
- Safety threats
- Social isolation
- Self-esteem problems
- Interpersonal difficulties
- Legal conflict
- Financial conflict

Thoughts

- Cognitive Distortions
 - Perfectionism
 - All-or-Nothing
 - Missed opportunities
 - Distorted perception of others' spaces
- Information Processing
 - Categorizing
 - Churning
 - Determining importance
 - Assumptions about items
 - Distraction from decluttering



Memory

- Lack of confidence in one's memory
 - ◆ Concerns about reliability of memory
- Need to remember or record
 - ◆ Won't remember information if possessions aren't available to provide reminders
- Out-of-sight is out-of-mind
 - ◆ Will forget about items unless they remain visible
- Visual cues

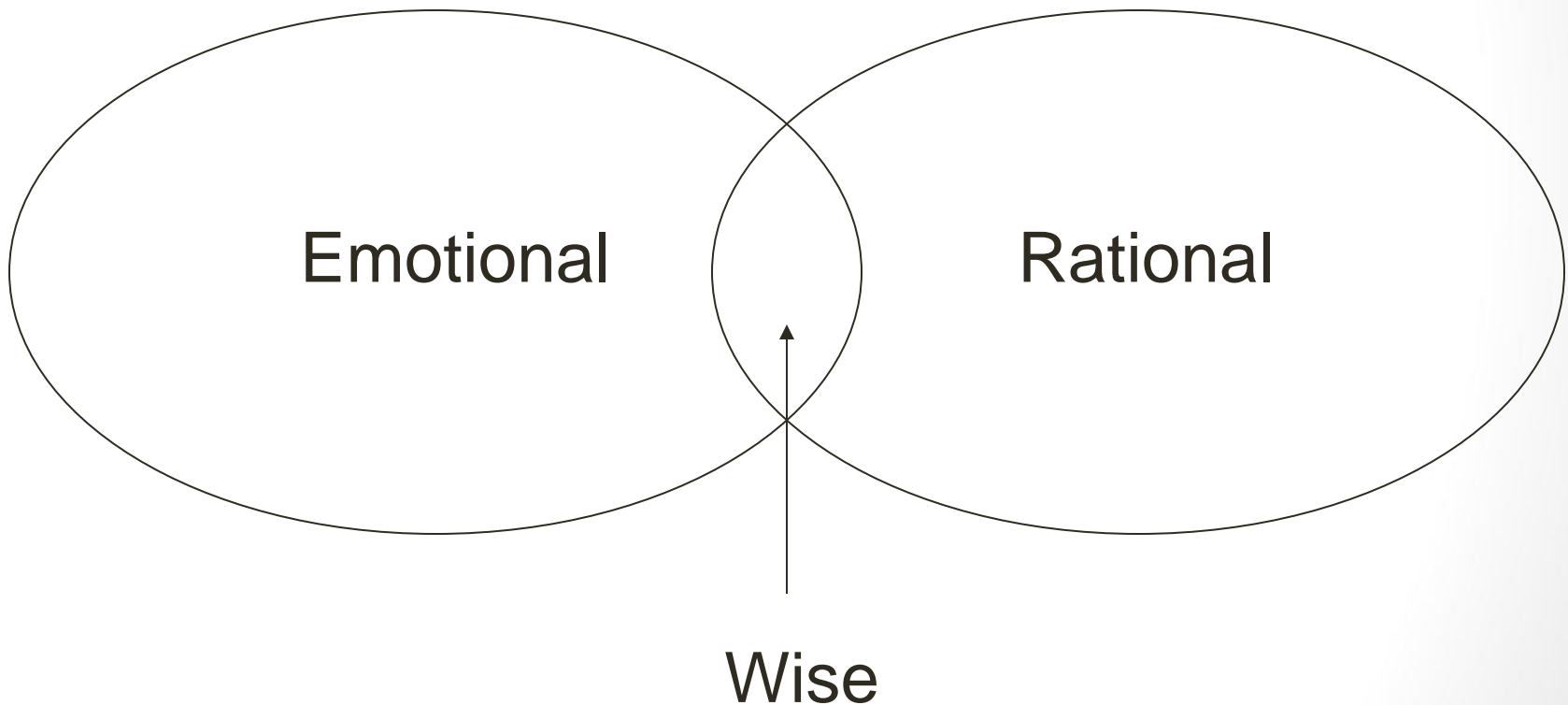


Feelings Involved with Holding On

- Emotional Attachment
 - ◆ Possessions as extension of self
 - ◆ Attach greater sentiment
 - ◆ Comforted by possessions
 - ◆ Exaggerated loss
- Fear of making mistakes
- Avoiding emotional discomfort



Emotional Attachment



Goals of Reducing Clutter

- Increase usable living space
- Organize possessions in systematic way
- Improve decision-making skills
- Reduce compulsive acquisition
- Identify, challenge, and replace hoarding beliefs
- Replacement behaviors
- Relapse prevention
- Personal goals

Organizational Plan

- Commit to spending a specific amount of time organizing/decluttering each day
- Pick one room and develop a plan
- Sort items into (big) boxes as you go
- Discard as much as possible
- Allow enough time/energy to take out trash
- When finished for the day, tidy up the sorting area and keep it clean until the next day
- The next day, continue where left off

Steps of Reducing Clutter

1. Select target area
2. Assess possessions
3. Create categories
4. Select a starting spot
5. Start working through the stuff
6. Continue until target area is cleared
7. Use space appropriately
8. Prevent new clutter

Questioning Yourself

- Is it current and in good condition?
- How many do you already have?
- Do you have enough time to use or read it?
- Have you used this during the past year?
- Will you be able to find it if you need it?
- Could you get another one if you need it?
- Do you have enough space for this?
- **Does this help you meet your goal?**

Attention and Concentration

- Use visual cues
- Use a few, simple categories
- Use reminder signs
- Assess distractibility
- Assess level of focus
- Make organizing/discarding a daily habit
- Simplify life
- Create limits
- “Am I over-stimulated?”
- Set short-term and long-term deadlines

Involving Professionals

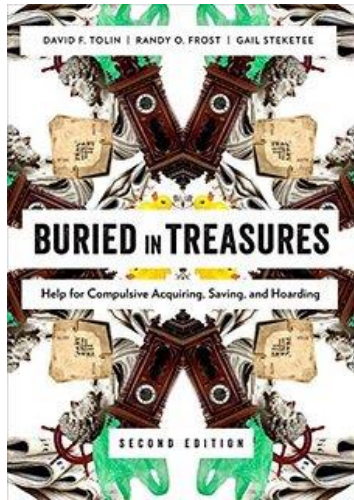
- Individual psychotherapy
 - Co-occurring issues (depression, anxiety)
- Group therapy
 - Education
 - Support
- Family education
- Train a helper
 - “Clutter Buddy”
- Enlist a professional organizer

“Letting Go” is an on-going process!

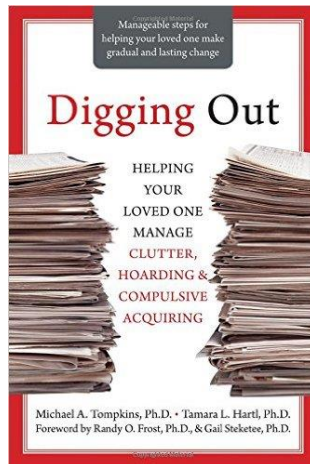
Focus on the Big Picture

- Don't get distracted by the clutter
- Someone else reducing the clutter will not change the behavior
- Focus on building skills
 - Decision-making
 - Organizing
 - Changing thought/behavioral patterns
 - Managing uncomfortable feelings

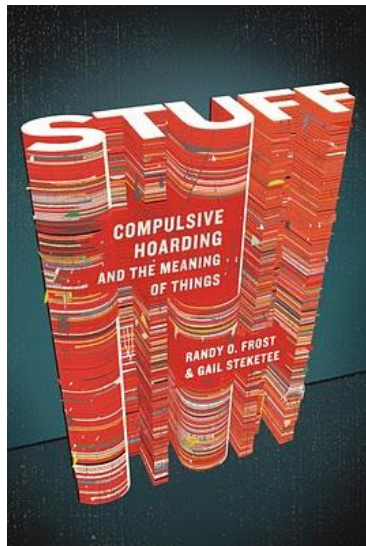
Resources



- Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding
 - ♦ David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, Gail Steketee



- Digging Out: Helping your loved one manage clutter, hoarding, and compulsive acquiring
 - ♦ Michael Tompkins and Tamara Hartl



- Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things
 - ♦ Gail Steketee and Randy O. Frost

Resources

- International Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Foundation
www.ocfoundation.org
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
www.adaa.org
- Institute for Challenging Disorganization
www.challengingdisorganization.org
- National Association of Professional Organizers
www.napo.net
- Hoarding Clean-Up Nationwide Directory
www.hoardingcleanup.com

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THANK YOU!